1: Jochelson E-5 (1900-01) 1908 RY4 Koryak RY4

Meryak is a form of hysterical fit, with some peculiarities. Severe cases of it result in epileptic and cataleptic fits. Mild cases of menerik are indicated by extreme excitability, a shuddering at the least unexpected noise, accompanied by indecent exclamations, such as the mention of male and female sexual organs, or by making remarks referring to them. In severe cases, the persons affected lose their will-power, and are easily controlled by outside influence: in fact, they may be said to be hypnotized without being in the state of sleep. Such subjects will repeat the words and actions of another, and will do whatever they are ordered to. In this condition they are able to repeat speeches made in a foreign language, or perform difficult, dangerous, or indecent things. 158

A sick old woman, for instance, is able to dance until utterly exhausted, being induced to do so by the mere sight of dancing young people; or to jump across a gorge or into a river, or throw herself into the fire, on the order of a joker; and if not stopped in time, she may be seriously injured or killed. Young profligates make sport of the modesty of women so affected, causing them to do various indecent things, or abusing them. Women particularly are subject to both forms of arctic hysteria; those of middle age suffering from menerik, and young women and girls from meryak.

In rare cases, men also suffer from nervous attacks, shamans in particular. I had several opportunities to observe the various symptoms of arctic hysteria among the tribes enumerated; but I had no opportunity to witness any cases of meryak among the Koryak. I was told that nervous attacks accompanied by spasms and catalepsy are frequent among women, particularly among those of the Reindeer Koryak.

The Koryak replied to my inquiries about menerik, that some time ago this disease was more widely spread than now, and that at present there are women suffering from a disease called in Koryak me'nkeiti ("to startle"), which is manifested by a quick susceptibility to fright. Subsequently I had the good fortune to observe two cases of menerik in a mild form. The first case was that of a young girl in Kuel. When my cup fell on the floor, she started, and exclaimed, "Pakuka!" ("vulva!")[1] Such exclamations are so closely connected with the fright, that they themselves are a symptom of the disease.

I saw two really insane people. One was quiet, rather feeble-minded; but the other, in the Kamenskoye settlement, was violent, and he was often kept chained. Once he took by force the food from my cossack and interpreter. On another occasion he stole a hatchet from me, and hid it. After that, the Koryak took him to another settlement. 158

People addicted to the use of fly-agaric can be detected by their appear-

[1] In tale No. 80 (p. 247) Kĭla', Big-Raven's niece, frightened by Grebe-Man, started, and exclaimed, "Tolakan'a'pal!" ("The penis hangs!") "Upakan'a'pal!" ("The vulva hangs!") From this we see that this symptom of arctic hysteria has long been known to the Koryak.

11: Kennan--213-215 T-3 (1865) 1870 Koryak-1-2
116, 182, 758, 761, 888 Reindeer

"The bodies of the dead, among all the wandering tribes, are burned, together with all their effects, in the hope of a final resurrection of both spirit and matter; and the sick, as soon as their recovery becomes hopeless, are either stoned to death or speared. [214] We found it to be true, as we had been told by the Russians and the Kamtchadals, that the Koraks murdered all their old people as soon as sickness or the infirmities of age unfitted them for the hardships of a nomadic life. Long experience has given them a terrible familiarity with the best and quickest methods of taking life; and they often explained to us with the most sickening minuteness, as we sat at night in their smoky pologs, the different ways in which a man could be killed, and pointed out the vital parts of the body where a spear or knife thrust would prove most instantly fatal. I thought of De Quincey's celebrated Essay upon 'Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts,' and of the field which a Korak encampment would afford to his 'Society of Connoisseurs in Murder.' All Koraks are taught to look upon such a death as the natural end of their existence, and they meet it generally with perfect composure. Instances are rare where a man desires to outlive the period of his physical activity and usefulness. They are put to death in the presence of the whole band, with elaborate but unintelligible ceremonies; their bodies are then burned, and the ashes suffered to be scattered and blown away by the wind.

These customs of murdering the old and sick, and burning the bodies of the dead, grow naturally out of the wandering life which the Koraks have adopted, and are only

illustrations of the powerful influence which physical laws exert everywhere upon the actions and moral feelings of men. They both follow logically and almost inevitably from the very nature of the country and cli-[215]mate. The barrenness of the soil in Northeastern Siberia, and the severity of the long winter, led man to domesticate the reindeer as the only means of obtaining a subsistence; the domestication of the reindeer necessitated a wandering life; a wandering life made sickness and infirmity unusually burdensome to both sufferers and supporters; and this finally led to the murder of the old and sick, as a measure both of policy and mercy. The same causes gave rise to the custom of burning the dead. Their nomadic life made it impossible for them to have any one place of common sepulture, and only with the greatest difficulty could they dig graves at all in the perpetually frozen ground. Bodies could not be left to be torn by wolves, and burning them was the only practicable alternative. Neither of these customs presupposes any original and innate savageness or barbarity on the part of the Koraks themselves. They are the natural development of certain circumstances, and only prove that the strongest emotions of human nature, such as filial reverence, fraternal affection, selfish love of life, and respect for the remains of friends, all are powerless to oppose the operation of great natural laws."